



SUMMARY OF COMMUNITY INPUT TO DATE

The following is a summary of stakeholder input into the Mt. Gilboa Feasibility Study. The summary is a result of compiling and culling through comments made at:

- Neighborhood Site Walk on December 2, 2023
- Neighborhood Forum on December 2, 2023
- Public Forum on December 4, 2023
- Email thread Mt. Gilboa/Crescent Hill Neighborhood
- Emails from individual stakeholders
- Six Word Stories¹

SIX WORD STORIES

(submitted by residents)

"High on a hill, mystery abounds!"

- Brendyn Schneider

"Arlington's gift to Massachusetts: Governor's mansion"

- Timur Yontar, Town Meeting Member, Bates Road

"One cannot 'improve' a natural habitat."

- Anonymous

"Leave no trace on Mt Gilboa"

- Anonymous

"Keep animals' homes wild, secret, safe."

- Anonymous

¹ A six-word story is six words that describe a situation, express a feeling, or share a vision for the future... a way to get to the heart of the matter.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

The following are key takeaways based on a review of public input to date.

Discussion in all forums has been animated; participants express much passion for **keeping the wooded area of Mt. Gilboa as a conservation area, that is, as natural as possible.** Often this was expressed as “do nothing.” There was significant agreement that removing invasive species and planting additional native species were welcome improvements. Some participants were in favor of a “Friends Group” to help maintain and keep the area clean. Yet others thought that defining the edges and the boundaries between public and private property would be helpful, but they were not in favor of what they saw as “intervention” in the woods themselves. A few participants thought additional amenities such as benches, more information about the trails and rules of conduct at the trailheads, and more poems would be desirable. In terms of ADA compliance, some felt it was unnecessary and asked how it was that other hiking areas such as Whipple Hill are not ADA compliant. However, there was agreement among some participants that a section of the trail could be made more accessible without touching the rest of the property. More information regarding ADA requirements was requested.

A large number of residents in the fairly dense neighborhood utilize Mt. Gilboa for a **number of activities**, often on a daily basis. Some see the wooded area as an extension of their back yards and a shared community space for enjoying nature as well as connecting different parts of the neighborhood. Neighbors enjoy Mt. Gilboa in a number of ways including for bird watching, dog walking, observing nature, walking to and from school, getting lost in the woods and sitting on large rocks to experience the peace and quiet.

The number one concern expressed is a fear that the attention being given to Mt. Gilboa will result in transforming the area into a park rather than a wild place for habitat. Additional concerns include: broken glass, trash and dog waste; invasive species; off-leash dogs; and unclear boundaries between public and private land.

Generally speaking, there was much more discussion regarding protecting the wooded areas of Mt. Gilboa than of the future of the historic house and garage. Also, there was much more agreement regarding a shared desired future of the woods than there was regarding the future of the house.

The future of the house and garage will need additional discussion. Participants for the most part seemed to appreciate the historic nature of the house, both architecturally speaking as well as the role it has played over time, however they expressed a number of concerns including:

- if rented as a private residence as it has been in the past, it makes the driveway a private space and therefore unwelcoming

- if it is reused for a public use, it will increase traffic and parking on dead end streets surrounding the wooded area
- expense of renovating the house and bringing it up to code, including ADA
- financing maintenance of the house
- a use that will attract more people will mean that more people will walk in the woods and disturb nature

There is no clear consensus regarding how to address these concerns. Opinions range from preserving the house, demolishing it, moving the building, or keeping only the staircase and building a viewing platform at the top. Another idea offered was to demolish the house, and add interpretive plaques with photos of the house and a description of its role in history. A “low impact” or “quiet” use was repeatedly called for. Reuse ideas include:

- Housing
- Artists studios
- Neighborhood community center
- Refugee housing
- Subsidized housing
- Housing for town employee
- Adult day care center
- Youth center
- Transfer property to the Arlington Housing Authority
- Co-work space
- Conservation Commission offices
- Restore house as a retreat and education center
- Artists residency (Arlington poet laureate and/or painters subsidized housing)
- Peace-building dialogue center
- Nature/ecology protection/conservation and learning center for children
- Wilderness/arts center
- Use as subsidized housing (2-3 units)
- Use as a conference center/events/ arts/conservation /cultural center/residency
- Caretaker’s apartment

There is **misinformation** about several aspects of Mount Gilboa, including (1) the condition of the house; (2) protection provided by its designation as conservation land; (3) requirements about the need to make the property ADA-compliant; (4) the long-term impact of minimal or no forest management on the property’s biodiversity.

There seems to be a **lack of trust**, presumably based on past experiences where reportedly residents’ voices were not solicited and/nor respected in a public process. Also, because of an increase in development there is concern that all parcels, including Town-owned conservation lands, are vulnerable to development pressures. Additionally, it is seen by many that Arlington has fewer open spaces, especially “wild” ones than surrounding communities, and there is a very strong desire to hold on to Mount Gilboa as a wild, wooded area. This holds true for immediate abutters, but also for those who are within walkable proximity.

Compiled responses to the question²:

“If you could do one thing to improve Mt. Gilboa what would it be?”

One thing	Comments	# of groups	# of dots ³
Nothing, Keep as is	Leave land as is Hands off the woods Ecological site for preservation	5	81
Remove house	Garage and asphalt	5	39
Remove invasive species	And more planting of native species Small scale removal Habitat restoration	5	36
Explore alternatives for public use of house	Wilderness/Art Center (9) Artists Studios (9) Neighborhood community center (6) Nature education ((1)	4	33
Repair house	For residential rental Bring up to code to keep as historic	3	25
Legal protection	Land and views, make official conservation land (like AGM)	1	14
Move house offsite	And restore habitat	1	14
Eliminate feasibility studies		1	9
Remove asphalt	At top	2	8
Keep staircase only	Build observation platform	1	7
Install a bench		1	7
Improve conditions for wildlife/habitat		1	6
Only define edges	Avoid trail maps Instead of signage - website, App, QR	1	5
Improve trail definition		1	4
Prohibit dog use		1	4
Reuse Housing for Refugees	And caretaker on the premises	1	4
Place interpretive signage	Wild life, history	1	3
Regulate dog use		1	2
Trash clean up		1	2
Dedicated caretaker		1	1

² Responses compiled from small group discussions on Dec. 2 (four groups) and Dec. 4 (four groups) for a total of 8 groups (one of which did not prioritize their responses to this question).

³ Participants were given 5 dots and they were instructed to use up to 3 dots on any one item.

SUMMARY OF INPUT FROM NEIGHBORHOOD FORUM

Saturday, December 2, 2023

Neighborhood Site Walk 2:00–3:30 PM

Peirce Elementary School 4:00 PM–6:00 PM

Purpose of Neighborhood Forum: *To invite the neighbors of Mt. Gilboa/Crescent Hill to come together and generate ideas that will create a shared vision and goals for the future of Mt. Gilboa. This in turn will be used as the foundation for an action plan that will outline the steps necessary to attain this vision.*

The forum was held in two parts: 1) a site walk with several stops – at each stop the Consultant Team asked the participants a series of questions (responses were recorded; notes were also taken) and 2) a forum held at the Peirce Elementary School included a brief presentation by the Consultants and facilitated small group discussions. There were approximately 40 persons present at the site walk, many of whom attended the forum at the school; a total of approximately 50 attended the forum.

The following is a summary of the input from participants at both the site walk and the forum. The summary identifies areas of consensus as well as ideas about which there was no clear consensus.

SITE WALK: DECEMBER 2, 2023

There were over 40 participants in the Site Walk. Participants were asked the following questions:

Access to Site

- Getting to Mt. Gilboa
- Parking

Trailhead

- Is this the best location?
- Interest in expanding the type of information provided @ the kiosk (e.g. bird sightings, other?)

Trail Conditions

- Maintenance
- Indicate level of difficulty?
- Convert lower trail to ADA compliance?

Views: Interest in improving/increasing views through selective cutting?

House and Garage

- Issues surrounding
- Ideas regarding reuse

What do people want to know about Mt. Gilboa?

- Interest in info signage re: flora and fauna?
- Historic interpretation: site and house?
- Other?

What do people most want to do at Mt. Gilboa?

- Walk dogs
- Bird watch
- Walk
- Rest on rocks

All who attended the site walk were neighbors that lived within walking distance of Mt. Gilboa. Most very frequently walked through the woods and highly valued the experience. Residents reported accessing Mt. Gilboa from the entrance that is closest to their house with most people coming from the entrance located at the kiosk. The majority of participants were in favor of minimal improvements to the wooded area and expressed concern that the natural wildness they very much appreciated would be disrupted if too many improvements (such as signage in the woods) were made. There were many ideas regarding what to do with the historic house on the property, but no consensus on any one idea.

The following comments were made along the way:

- *Signage at area parking places could direct people to hiking areas*
- *Mt. Gilboa is a stop over for Migratory birds*
- *Since house has been empty have noticed significant increase in wildlife*
- *There should be fewer people; they pollute, also dogs chase animals*
- *I don't want this to turn into Whipple Hill (with dog waste, off-leash dogs, cigarette butts and too many people).*
- *I walk quietly.*
- *Encouraging more humans to the site can only lead to degradation.*
- *It's hard for us to fully explain our feelings about the site; it will be easier when we have a concept to react to.*
- *Put trailhead at other entrances as well so that this entrance is not so crowded*
- *Have map with clear trails and reduce impact on environment*
- *Where does property end? Sometimes it is hard to know where public and private boundaries are (a couple of residents reported that people frequently go onto their property not knowing that they are no longer on Mt. Gilboa land)*
- *People just don't know where the property ends.*
- *It might be helpful to have a map or otherwise indicate where the trails are*
- *Glacial rock formations - add markers*
- *What are daily usage numbers?*
- *It's a neighborhood park*
- *There is a great variety of wildlife here*
- *We could add an acknowledgement at the trailhead stating that some trails are unmarked and rocky*



*Some of the participants on the site walk,
December 2, 2023*

- *Why do we need to make it ADA compliant? Why can't we just leave it alone?*
- *How can we include ADA in some section, the lower trail seems most appropriate.*
- *Sometimes it's nice to have to pay attention... to get lost... this is different from other places in town... it contributes to the diversity of places... we don't want it to be the same as others.*
- *Personally, I would appreciate having some aspect of the site being accessible, an area that doesn't require a huge intervention. The lower trail seems like a good candidate.*
- *Use colored dots to indicate level of difficulty.*
- *Any kind of marking feels like development to me, an encroachment of the outside and I resent it.*
- *Get rid of invasive plants*
- *Amazing that it's so quiet*
- *As soon as you walk up the hill everyone says hello*
- *It's incredible, unusual, a sense of peace here, a restorative space*
- *We are defending that sense of peace*
- *Is doing nothing on the table?*
- *When you ask all these questions it feels like you want to make big changes and that you have already decided what the concept is*
- *Increasing dogs and people is the opposite of conservation*
- *The fact that it is on top of the hill and you can watch the sun go down, it's so special*
- *A place for children to have a place to explore*
- *When I come here I rarely see other people and when I do, I usually know them*
- *It can be used as outdoor classroom for environmental education*
- *There are some year-round views of Boston, no need to cut trees to create more views; people can go to Skyline Park for views of Boston's skyline.*
- *Add more native plants*
- *Don't remove any trees*
- *We are very concerned about parking and traffic congestion (on streets and in woods); will there be a parking and traffic impact analysis conducted as part of this study?*
- *Use some asphalt for parking*
- *Dedicate a bench*
- *Neighborhood voices should be heard loudly*
- *My number one priority is conservation*
- *We have plenty of touched places, we want this one to be untouched.*
- *The "forest way" home from school (many parents prefer that their children walk to and from school through Mt. Gilboa than on streets busy with automobiles)*
- *My kids used to walk to school through here. I have a lot of wonderful memories of that as do they. Kids that have these experiences and grow up to be voters and donors protect the environment because they have experienced it.*

HOUSE

- *Renting may have the least impact*
- *Take the house down, put up sign with photos of house*
- *Let's get rid of the house, it's an eyesore*
- *Leave house as a ruin*
- *Would it be cheaper to tear it down than to renovate and rent it?*
- *It's not the Town's business to get into renting*
- *I would love to have a tour of the inside*
- *If we sold it that would be great revenue... and if we are considering renting it, then someone is going to be living there anyway*
- *It seems that for any public use, it would need to be ADA compliant and that would be very costly. If rented we would only need to make reasonable accommodations if someone requested them, so maybe find a quiet tenant who wants to live in a nature preserve.*
- *I never come up this way. The no trespassing signs make it feel like it is private property. Make it more accessible to the public.*
- *Either convert the house into something we can use or get rid of it*
- *When I first moved here I wasn't sure whether this was private or public property*
- *I am in favor of taking the house down and that would create views. Restore the site to the history of before the house was built. Take a photo of the house and put up an interpretive plaque, that way preserving and telling the house's history.*
- *Use some of the asphalted space for parking so that people don't park in front of people's houses.*



NEIGHBORHOOD CONVERSATION: DECEMBER 2, 2023, 4:00 PM – 6:00 PM

Approximately 50 people attended the forum, almost half had not been at the site walk held earlier in the day.

Favorite Features to Preserve: *Neighbors use the trails, many on a daily basis to walk to and from school, as a refuge, as a place of peace and quiet. They are most appreciative of what they see as a precious “wild,” natural, neighborhood asset and are very much interested in preserving the area “as is.” What they most appreciate:*

- wildness/wildlife/wilderness in otherwise urban fabric
- trails
- geology
- untouched environment
- natural habitat (e.g. fox, coyotes)
- birding
- peacefulness
- Walking/exercise
- Safe natural space for children

Also:

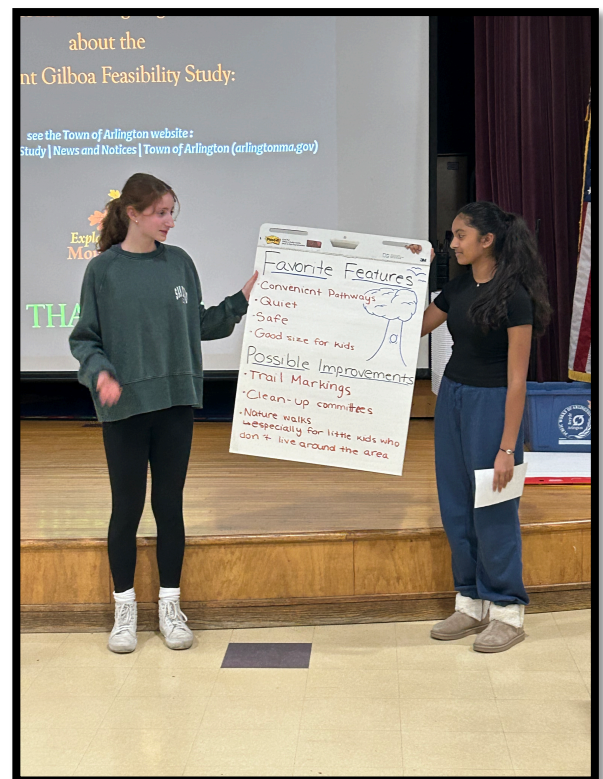
- You can get lost there
- Proximity to homes, easy to get to
- Subtle entrances – low key
- Healing
- Solitude
- Rocky vistas

Concerns to Address: *The number one concern was a fear that the discussion regarding making improvements to the site would include disturbing natural elements and wildlife and, that it would be converted into a park instead of what is seen as a wilderness refuge. Other concerns include:*

- litter/broken glass
- impact of attracting more people on traffic, parking, and natural features
- off-leash dogs. dog waste, too many dogs/use by dog-walkers
- invasive plants
- unclear boundaries
- what to do about the house

Also:

- barbed wire
- too small
- icy



Teen Voice, Dec. 2, 2023

- runoff from driveway
- remnant human landscape elements
- views obstructed by house
- Town's utilities disrupt with noise and construction
- Could be more wild
- Steps in woods (intervention into nature)
- Amount of parking
- Unclear trails

Potential Improvements to Consider: *While most of the participants would like there to be a minimal of intervention/improvement to the site, there was agreement among many regarding the removal of invasive plants and some planting of additional native plants. Other "improvements" mentioned by some participants, include:*

- Keep as is, do nothing
- memorial bench for resting
- more places for poems (ephemeral)
- clarify where trails are and where boundaries of Mt. Gilboa end (public/private delineation)
- legal protection of conservation land

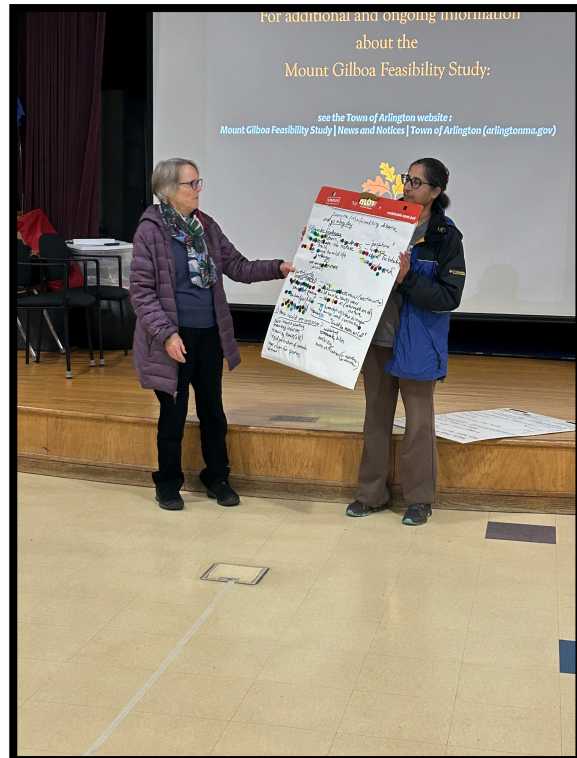
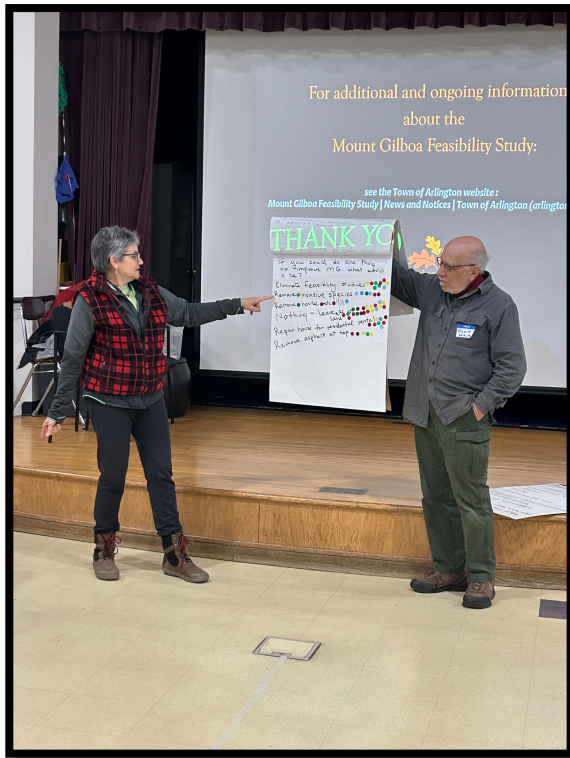
Also:

- remove kiosk and trail marking to discourage use
- remove house, driveway and garage
- improve conditions for wildlife/habitat
- interpretative signs at trail heads (but minimal)
- additional trailheads at other entrances
- post rules about dog use
- remove asphalt at top
- trash barrel and pick up
- leaf clearing
- re-grade main trail
- remove house
- neighborhood hikes
- reuse house for artists' studios
- ecological enhancement (planting, erosion control, waste management)

Future of House and Garage: Needs Further Discussion: *The future use of house and garage was the topic that inspired much discussion, but garnered the least agreement among participants. Some appreciate the architecture and history that the house represents, others see it as dilapidated and fear that its reuse would potentially lead to an increase in parking and traffic in the surrounding neighborhood. Ideas regarding what to do with the house range from demolishing, to moving, to reusing the building for a number of uses. One group articulated shared objectives regarding what they feel should not happen with the house, mainly: Do not use for ways that increase traffic in the neighborhood and do not demolish to build more housing. Ideas included:*

- demolish it
- move it
- reuse as housing, artists' studios

- sell it
- rent
- community use
- use by town employee
- if feasible restore and rent
- clubhouse for neighborhood
- save staircase and build observation deck for enjoyment of views
- remove asphalt at top
- consider financial impact
- concern about increase in traffic, depending on use



Small group report back to large group,
Dec. 2, 2023

SUMMARY OF INPUT FROM PUBLIC FORUM

Monday, December 4, 2023

Peirce Elementary School 7:00 PM–9:00 PM

Purpose of Public Forum: *To invite the residents of Arlington to come together and generate ideas that will create a shared vision and goals for the future of Mt. Gilboa. This in turn will be used as the foundation for an action plan that will outline the steps necessary to attain this vision.*

Approximately 40 people attended the forum. Several attendees had also been at the previous forum held on Saturday afternoon. All attendees reported visiting the site frequently, many on a daily basis.

Favorite Features to Preserve:

Participants expressed a strong interest in preserving the “wildness” and natural feel of the woods. They most appreciate:

- Wildness and wildlife refuge
- Untouched, unenhanced / blended with nature
- Trees, tree canopy
- Nature

Also:

- Historic house and iconic vista
- Trails and views
- Not over used
- Quiet

Concerns to Address: *Participants were most concerned that the Feasibility Study would result in making unwanted changes to the area. They also passionately expressed a concern that decisions have already been made regarding what “improvements” will be made to Mt. Gilboa and that their voices will not be heard or considered. They were also concerned about:*

- Broken glass and trash, dog waste (human impacts)
- Invasive species



Teen Voice, Public Forum, December 4, 2023

Also:

- That a decision has already been made
- How will the house and whatever happens to it be insulated from surrounding natural space
- Vision of a “pure” natural conservation zone is not compatible with coupled human-environment and access to diverse populations
- Lack of trust that town will listen to community desires
- How to respond to densely populated and increasing population
- Desire for regenerative / creative use for the space
- Concerns about protecting from overuse
- Concerns that process captures only loudest voices
- Off-leash dogs
- Runoff/erosion on paths
- Public mis-use
- House /driveway/garage including ambiguity /safety/security
- Obscure trails uneven
- Lack of protection of views (neighbor obscuring views)
- Feels unwelcoming
- Dilapidated house and financing maintenance
- House not open to the public
- Difficult public access/steep

Potential Improvements to Consider: *There was much concern expressed regarding how the term “improvements” is defined. Most participants did not want to add any signs of human intervention into what they see as a wild site. Almost all agreed that removing invasive plants is a welcome improvement. A number also felt that cleaning trash and dog waste would help to keep the site better maintained.*

- Remove invasive plants
- Do nothing

Also:

- Town-supported “Friends of Gilboa” to do maintenance with support of Conservation Commission
- Add security to address mis-use: surveillance features
- Two benches (wooden)
- Youth environmental education and conservation engagement (community service opportunity)
- Events for maintenance and clean up (trail maintenance and invasive management)
- Guidebook of birds/vegetation (maps without signage)
- Restore habitat
- Greater legal protection
- Trash clean up
- Access to house site/ views
- Move house offsite and restore habitat

- Restore house
- Hands off the woods
- Dedicated caretaker

Future of House and Garage: Needs Further Discussion: *There was no significant agreement regarding a desired future for the house and garage. In fact, there were many contradictory ideas offered that ranged from demolishing it, relocating it, and reusing it for private as well as public use.*

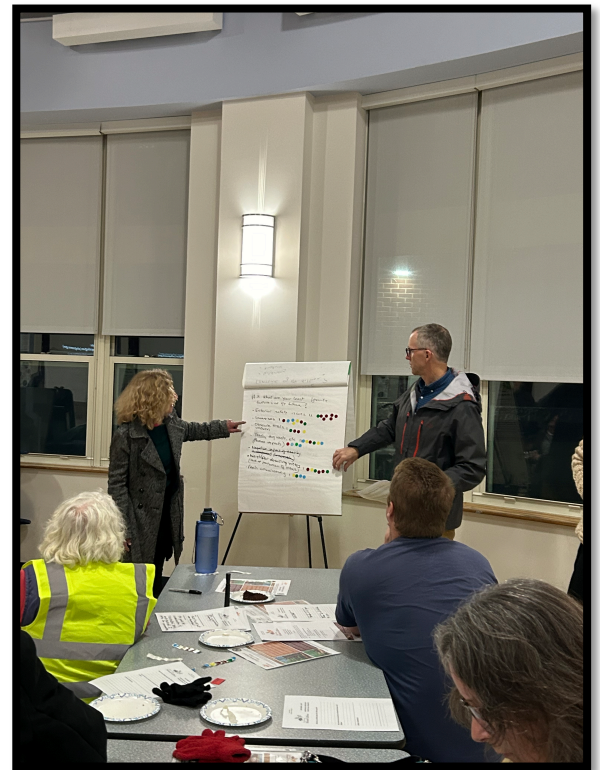
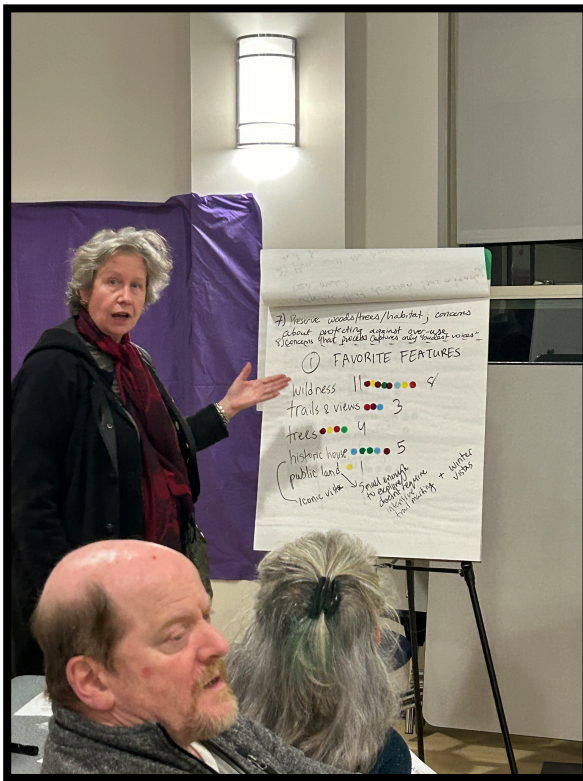
- Remove house and garage and pavement and replant
- Restore house as a retreat and education center, artists residency (Arlington poet laureate and/or painters subsidized housing), peace-building dialogue center, low-impact public use, nature/ecology protection/conservation and learning center for children, wilderness/arts center, a neighborhood community center, Use as subsidized housing (2-3 units), use as a conference center/events/ arts/conservation /cultural center/residency, use for refugee/immigrant housing, Caretaker's apartment, etc.

Also:

- Stop deterioration of the house (not the same as fixing it)
- Lots of people coming and going is a bad thing
- Putting a number of parking spaces next to the house is a bad thing
- Take the garage down and bring the house up to code
- Move house to elsewhere in town (maybe Reservoir Beach)
- Protect ecology
- Retain public access to the site
- Long term lease to preservation organization or any responsible group
- Lease for conservation to generate income
- If all else fails and the town cannot do anything, move the house, keep the staircase, and use the foundation to create an observation point
- Minimum renovation for single family
- Bring the house up to code and keep it as an historic site
- The house makes the woods unique and gives them a certain feeling
- If the house is kept, it should be acknowledged as part of the open space

Neighbors who had attended the neighborhood forum on Saturday were asked to form a separate group so that they could have an opportunity to further discuss relevant issues (and not answer the same questions for a second time). When asked why they came to this forum (a repeat of the one held specifically for them two days earlier), they responded that they wanted to be sure that their voices were heard and that they wanted to emphasize their points. One of the neighbors asked for a show of hands to demonstrate agreement with the following statement: ***"We want an ecological site for preservation and not a human-centric park."*** A large majority of the forum participants raised their hands. The group spent some time discussing what this meant to them:

- No repurposing, no enhancing
- Don't be human centric
- Wild space, preserve as is
- Only define the edges
- Avoid trail maps
- Remove asphalt
- Instead of signage post information on a website and/or App/QR code and only at the entrances at the edges
- Support bio-diversity



Small group report back to large group,
Dec. 4, 2023

REPRESENTATIVE QUOTES

(from written responses to questions at forums on Dec. 2 (25 respondents) and Dec. 4, 2023 (8 respondents))

Memories of first time at Mt. Gilboa

"Collected acorns with my son and it was beautiful"

"I lived in Somerville in 1980s and was looking for a place to rock climb. I studied a topographical map and found the cliff at Mt. Gilboa and its partially conserved land."

"Amazing to have a section of "untouched" forest and natural space a few steps away from home."

"Picking wild blueberries."

"So surprised to find an unimproved pocket of land in the middle of the neighborhood. Went for a walk with our kids the day we moved into Crescent Hill Avenue."

"Our first visit was when we looked to purchase our home. The nature conservation land is one the reasons we choose to buy our house."

"The first week I move in (2016) I enjoyed the fact that I lived next to an untouched wilderness area that was peaceful. I hiked, saw the sunset and read poems from people. Just beautiful as is."

"I was delighted to discover some wilderness right in my neighborhood. I loved the hilly climb and subtle trails and abundance of trees."

"Twelve years ago I discovered Mt. Gilboa and wondered where it would lead to. I don't like to walk on streets so I was so grateful to find this peaceful area near my home to contemplate nature."

"Discovering a secret treasure in our neighborhood."

"Walked with my dog. My first impression: lucky to live so close to the woods."

"1999 – I thought wow! What a great resource."

"October 5, 1996 visiting my (now) house with the real estate agent- a 70 year old (since died) neighbor walked out of Mt. Gilboa woods with her hands full of mushrooms she had collected there. It was love at first sight for me – wild open land, mushrooms, great neighbors, contact with natural space."

"Wow, what a wonderful (hidden?) resource."

"I took my 2-year old on a Sunday morning and it was magical. We went to the rock and saw the views and enjoyed the wildness."

"I bought a house next to the land in 2005. I walked the area and it was a primary reason I bought the house. I have an amazing view from the top of rocks overlooking Westminster Ave."

"Magical, peaceful, beautiful, a real treasure. I walked through with my then young kids (3)."

"It was the reason I purchased my home. I walk in the woods every day."

"I went to Mt. Gilboa for the first time in 1989. I loved the peaceful, quite of the area. I walked all over."

"2003, newly arrived to the neighborhood. Delighted for open, quite space at the end of our street. It was our walking path to Peirce; we've had birthday party picnics there too."

Favorite thing to do at Mt. Gilboa

"hiking with my children, walking our dog, especially walking kids to school each day."

"Walks with less traffic; nature-friendly people."

"observe nature"

"Enjoy and observe wildlife passively and actively"

"Hike and walk the dog; let the children explore, walk through to school every day; be in a quiet, natural space."

"Being there with friends; seeing Boston; listening to birds."

"Thanksgiving Day walk, Christmas walk, walk after first snow, autumn walk, full moon walk"

"Walk my kids to school. Allow my children to be in a natural space without pavement (much)."

"Peaceful walks, watching nature, walking through undeveloped forest areas."

"Walking my dog. Enjoying the sunlight through the trees, the solitude, the unexpected: will I see any wildlife?"

"Walk, sit on a sun-warmed rock and look at the clouds overhead, or the sky through the trees."

"Walking my dog. healing space; hiking/exercising; experiencing and enjoying wildlife, e.g. I just saw a coy wolf this afternoon!"

"Walk for fun and as a pleasant route to other destinations."

"Walking, thinking, breathing."

"just walking, wandering – discovering new paths, areas, views WITHOUT signage to tell me where I am. It's wild and rocky and natural. I like watching huge oak trees grow, lose limbs, decompose over the years without human intervention. Sit on rock ledges, alone."

"Walk alone or with my dog and observe the sounds and sights around me."

"Walk, see the views, escape."

"Hiking the loop around the house."

"I am in the woods of Mt. Gilboa 2-3 times daily. I walk my dogs; sometimes I go to sit and write or read."

"I love just the quietness and wildness. A walk in the woods is a wonderful way to reset, connect with nature. It's a beautiful wonderful spot."

"Go for walks, watch the season's change, restorative sense of being in nature."

"It's such a treat to have a neighborhood park where my children feel safe to build fairy houses."

What makes Mt. Gilboa special?

"It is an unusually wild place in an area that has very little green space."

"Undeveloped natural wilderness."

"wild space"

"elevation, views, and large unmanicured woods"

"The wildness of it, even surrounded by roads and houses."

"That it feels like finding your very own woodland paradise; like you could almost be in the Berkshires except you're right outside Boston."

Concerns about the future of Mt. Gilboa

"Leave it alone; do not improve; it's just left wild"

"Do not improve it; do not increase foot traffic."

"My main concern is that the wildness of the area will be compromised. It's important to me that the ecology of the area be protected."

"Remove invasive species."

"Preserve the house or move it."

"That it might get overdeveloped."

"Don't build new trails, leave it as is. Regarding the house: remove it."

"Restore the house for meeting space for arts and NGOs."

"The Town loves to 'improve' things, spend money, and otherwise tinker with areas that could be better protected, as is. I don't want to see Mt. Gilboa targeted."

"I don't want more structures."

"Concerns about what will happen with house, invasive species, and erosion."

"loss of wildlife"

"Concern about increased human use making Mt. Gilboa less safe for wildlife."

"I am deeply concerned that enhancing the house's use to attract more people will be at the cost of negatively impacting the most important value of the parcel – the area as a conservation land."

"At some point in the future there will need to be a decision about whether to restore or tear down the house."

"Ruining its beauty, peacefulness, and safety."

"It is not a good place to build housing; open space is too precious in Arlington. Uses that don't respect nature."

"My concern is that this process will end with taking the natural elements away. The untouched aspects are so important in this urban environment."

"Please prevent major commercialization or renovations; worried about wildlife habitat and impacting environment."

"It would be a shame for the area to become less wild and quiet. There are so few spots of wilderness in Arlington at all. We must protect this area for wildlife also."

"With my neighborhood participating strongly in favor of protecting the wildness, I don't have any concerns."

"It needs to be left alone!! Please think for wildlife sake (plants and animals)!"

"The land should remain as is, rugged and wild. I am less concerned about what happens to the house/garage."

"The house falling down/being unsafe, overdevelopment, overuse."

"I do NOT want to see the trails/paths and land become human processed with signage, paved trails. Keep it raw and real, not another well-marked park."

"Afraid that "improvements" will destroy the wonderful existing wild space."

"I want the wildness preserved. I do not believe ADA compliance would be required; I will research. Don't increase traffic to the area (entrances are on side streets that dead-end; no capacity for additional traffic and parking). Please take close neighbors views more seriously than others. "

"Would not like to see any landscaping or tree cutting; the space should be kept as wild as possible. We don't need to change every parcel of land to suit humans. No use of the house is consistent with this goal, so the house should be removed."

"I am desperate and passionate that it is left alone! The owl, fox, coyote(s)! Please!"

"Please don't change anything!!! I really don't want it to be developed or changed to a park or made ADA compliant (it doesn't make sense in this space)."

"I want the land to stay as it is now. The house and garage could be taken down – leaving the land open."

"Traffic- increase in both cars for parking and walkers. Huge increase in off-lease dogs at reservoir since the improvements there."

Other Comments

"The goals for conservation and recreation seem antithetical. I vote for conservation."

"Benches should be wooden, no plastic."

"Please no signage. I love the sense of being in the woods... which signage immediately ruins."

"I hope everyone can be respectful of one another in this process; think of the hard work the town workers are putting in, the high emotions everyone's carrying into this process. Be respectful of the histories everyone brings to this process. I hope the consultants can understand the tenuous history of woodlands and community development projects in Arlington and why emotions are running so high through this project. "

SAMPLE THOUGHTS EXPRESSED IN NEIGHBORHOOD EMAIL THREAD

"There is a strong feeling that the woods should be kept completely wild and 'unimproved.' No cutting of trees to open a view. Most, but not all seemed to want no benches, resurfacing of paths, or an increase in signage or marking of trails."

"My personal view is that [the house] is great looking, unique, and historical 99-year old house that should be preserved and put to the lowest-impact use that can be found."

"Don't call in the wrecking ball yet, please. I love the house too and hope it stays but agree that, if it does, it should continue to be used 'quietly.'"

"The woods should be left as pristine as possible."

"It is one of the few/only truly wild spaces in Arlington. In our yard we've had wild turkeys, foxes, coyotes (and of course countless rabbits) precisely because of that patch of land."

"It would be a shame to put our human fingerprints and needs all over it."

"Parking is already an issue."

"I like the concept of establishing a community center of some sort, however, the financial implications are significant."

"I think the priority should be the woods and the wildlife."

"If the house is to be used for any purpose, it should directly relate to nature conservation- a nature education center or something such as that."

"I love how you can see the house up on the hill from all the way over at the Res."

"Can you imagine somebody renting a room there [in the house] to write their novel, with the woods as their inspiration?"

"As Arlington confronts the tangible impacts of climate change, the preservation of our remaining woods becomes increasingly crucial."

"After COVID there has been more of a need for people to work from home... led to the rise of 'co-working' spaces as many people don't have a home office. These are expensive and don't usually allow for occasional use – you have to sign up for a monthly fee... I think it would be tremendously useful to have rooms available for quiet work... Those who need occasional extra room for a project, artwork, etc. could also use this kind of space."

SAMPLE COMMENTS FROM EMAILS SENT BY STAKEHOLDERS

"The space would take a lot of work to make it usable by the general public, but can quickly be made a very comfortable rental house with fantastic magical surrounding woods which still supports coyotes, foxes, young eagles, red tailed hawks, Cooper's hawks, falcons in addition to the multiple types of local and migrating birds. There used to be many other local resident critters but the influx of humans during Covid caused a decline in sightings."

"I am writing to ask that you do not "improve" or "enhance" the woods of Mt. Gilboa and that you leave them alone. Natural woodlands like these are rare in Arlington and should not be changed or altered (it's reasonable to maintain the historic house). "

"I created the poetry board in 2014 (with David White's support and an eager group of Eagle Scouts earning a carpentry badge). I hope it can remain part of the Mt. Gilboa ecosystem."

"Mt. Gilboa in its current state is a haven for those of us who would prefer not to see signage, manicured paths, and other indications of management when we go for a walk in the woods. When I walk or run there, I can forget for a while that I'm surrounded by houses and roads and cars, and just turn my brain off! I can forget my profound sorrow about the state of our planet, and give thanks for this little spot of wildness in our dense community."

"I would love to see a park there for the community and of course, history about the place - who built a house that you can see for miles around? Was it a developer that owned a bunch of land? Was there a family there? It's always struck me as odd that something so visible doesn't have accessible info about it. Tours of the house would be great. Green space for outdoor movies, picnics, a spot to see the 4th of July fireworks - so much can be done up there! The trails are awesome too. "

"My primary concern is how the existing house and other structures affect the experience of Mt. Gilboa as conservation land – as natural open space. Even though the house is owned by the Town, it has been rented out to private individuals as a residence, and that greatly inhibits general public's use of the very central and dominating space at the top."

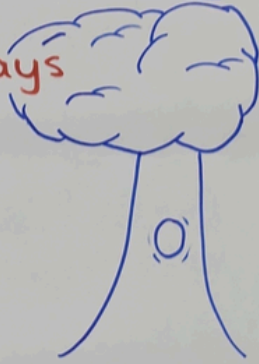
"As to the house, I hope that it will not be removed and replaced with a vista park, as this will mean tree removal and significant changes to the landscape. It would be a shame to destroy what instead could be converted into two or three units to add to our Subsidized Housing Inventory. I understand that the drive would need to be widened. and other updates made, but re-use of the house would be a fairly low impact way to add a small amount of housing. Not to mention keep a lot of waste out of a landfill."

TEEN VOICE

Input of teens attending the forums

Favorite Features

- Convenient Pathways
- Quiet
- Safe
- Good size for kids



Possible Improvements

- Trail Markings
- Clean-up committees
- Nature walks
↳ especially for little kids who don't live around the area

What Nature Means to

ME

- Nature makes me feel **RELAXED**



- Nature helps to **CALM** me down



- my favorite part about nature is the **WILDLIFE**

